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ABSTRACT

The problem of school dropouts and at-risk students has many causes. No one cause can be seen clearly as the dominant factor in a child leaving school and the possibility of that student not finishing his high school career. This program addressed the problems of at-risk students with poor social and academic skills. The literature reviewed stressed a multi-level approach to the problem concentrating on the improvement of academic performance, attitude, and self-confidence. The goals of the program were to: (1) significantly increase self-confidence; (2) sensitize faculty and administration to the problems of the at-risk student; (3) increase the academic performance of the targeted students; and (4) improve the attitudes of the students toward school. A multi-faceted program involving faculty, parents, peers, and counselors was used to address these goals. Private secondary school students (N=35) from grades 7, 8, and 9 were targeted for the program and 28 of these students met the stated goals and objectives of the practicum. Results indicated that individualization and concentrated effort in learning strategies, in conjunction with parent and faculty involvement, aided in raising self-esteem and in keeping the at-risk student in school. Students displayed greater academic motivation due to an increase in self-esteem and expressed positive feelings about themselves resulting in academic success. (Author/LLL)

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Development and Implementation of an At-Risk Program to Aid Targeted Middle School Students with Self Esteem and Academic Performance

by

Diane A. Kallmann
Cluster XXV

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed. D. Program
in Early and Middle Childhood
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education

NOVA UNIVERSITY

1991

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Approved:

January, 1992
Date

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ABSTRACT

Development and Implementation of an At-Risk Program to Aid Targeted Middle School Students with Self Esteem and Academic Performance. Kallmann, Diane A., 1991: Practicum Report, Nova University Ed. D. Program in Early and Middle Childhood. Descriptors: Secondary Education / Middle Schools / Drop Out Prevention / Self-Concept / Discipline / Attendance

This practicum addressed the problems of at-risk students with poor social and academic shills. Students lacked learning strategies and displayed poor social skills resulting in student drop out. The literature reviewed stressed a multi level approach to the problem concentrating on the improvement of academic performance, attitude and self-confidence.

This writer's goals were: (a) to significantly increase self-confidence; (b) to sensitize faculty and administration to the problems of the at-risk student; (c) to increase the academic performance of the targeted students; and (d) to improve the attitude of the students toward school. In addressing these four goals, the writer implemented a multi faceted program involving faculty, parents, peers and counselor.

Over thirty students were targeted for the program and twenty-eight of these students met the stated goals and objectives of the practicum. Results indicated that individualization, concentrated effort in learning strategies,in conjunction with parent and faculty involvement aid in raising self-esteem and in keeping the at-risk student in school. Students displayed greater academic motivation due to an increase in self esteem and expressed positive feelings about themselves resulting in academic success.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Description of Community

The school in which the practicum took place is located in the southeastern part of the United States. The area is one of the fastest growing in the south and the community is trilingual. New families are constantly moving into the area and the community is in a constant state of flux.

Today, there are few vacant parcels of land and the cost of the lots that are available is prohibitive. One of the most important factors in this community is its concentration of professionals and its proximity to one of the largest urban areas in the south.

The socioeconomic make-up of the community is generally upper middle class. However, there are areas of extreme wealth due to the large amount of land located on water. The community is stable in number but the ethnicity is constantly changing.

Writer's Work Setting and Role

The setting in which this practicum was conducted is an educational grouping of schools that contains students from pre-kindergarten to high school. This private school setting consists of six buildings located on over six acres of land in the south eastern part of the United States. The students come from as far as fifty miles away traveling over an hour on school transportation to attend.

The number of students in the entire complex is over twelve hundred; the socioeconomic make-up of the community is middle class. There is an emphasis on educational values. The number of students is greater in the lower grades and there are two main reasons for this. Many of the students do not maintain the standard set by the school and they are asked to leave. The second major reason for the decrease in enrollment is that many of the parents feel the crunch of economics as the student gets older and college expenses become a reality.

The school is run by a board of lay people who consider the educational complex a business proposition. In the over 18 years of its existence the school has only been in debt once, the past fiscal year; many of the graduates have gone to some of the most prestigious universities.

The school in which the practicum was conducted is the secondary school consisting of the seventh through twelfth

grades. There are over 250 students in the secondary school, an increase from the previous year's enrollment of over 60 students. The majority of new students are in grades 7, 8, and 9. Students in grades 7 and 8 do not have classes with the students in grades 9 to 12; however, the bell schedule for the six grades is the same and the format for the day is identical. This allows for social interaction among the 250 students. The students involved in this practicum were from grades 7, 8, and 9.

The school's philosophy stresses the education of the entire child emphasizing the religious aspects in all areas of study. Each student takes nine core classes, and prayer is required twice a day. All students take-English, math, social studies, science, foreign language, three religious classes, computers, and physical education each year. A dress code is strictly enforced and violators sent home if the proper attire is not worn.

The general atmosphere of the school is warm and friendly with students calling teachers at home and inviting them to parties given by the parents. The entire faculty is either state certified or in the process of achieving certification; frequent teacher evaluation occurs, primarily on an informal basis.

The administration consists of one dean, who is responsible for the entire complex; one principal, for each of the three divisions within the school; and two religious

principals one for the primary school, kindergarten to sixth grade and one for the secondary school, seventh to twelfth grade. There are two certified guidance counselors, one working with the primary school and one with the secondary school on a part time basis.

The faculty of the secondary school is composed of twenty-two teachers. All teachers are assigned to classes in their area of certification. There are 16 males and 6 females on the faculty. All twenty-two faculty members are Caucasian; there are no other racial or ethnic groups represented on the faculty. Twenty members of the faculty have taught for over 10 years the two other faculty members have only been teaching for two years. Twelve teachers hold a master's degree or higher.

Special programs offered at the school are for gifted students with 13 eighth grade students going to the county gifted program one day a week in addition to the gifted program provided in the school. The total number of students in either of the gifted programs is 38. The students who are eligible for each of these programs is determined by state criteria. There is also a limited program for English as a Second Language. These students meet with a specialist in this program for one 40 minute period per day and are expected to seek outside help in this area.

The writer holds an undergraduate degree in English

education and a master's degree in guidance and counseling. She is certified by the Department of Education in the following subject areas; English, speech, drama, and guidance and counseling.

This writer has served this school system for the past 8 years. Prior to this the writer taught in the Midwest in a public school for over 14 years. The first years of service in this setting were as an English teacher. At the present school setting the writer functions as English teacher, guidance counselor, and curriculum co-ordinator for the secondary school. During this time the writer has been active in school-related programs. She has served as sponsor of the senior class, student government, and the National Junior and Senior Honor Societies. In addition to these activities, she has served on various committees including the school steering committee, responsible for the educational direction the school will take.

CHAPTER II

STUDY OF THE PROBLEM

Problem Description

Within this private school setting there is a group of students who can be considered at-risk. These students are either new to this school or are students who exhibit a pattern of behavior that places them in a category often referred to as the at-risk student. . . . . .

Each year new students enroll in the secondary school. The greatest number of these students enroll in grades seven, eight and nine. They often come from a public school setting where they failed socially or scholastically. This group of students brings with them a combination of problems that may or may not be spread like a virus to the fringe group that exists within the school structure. A second group of newcomers often comes from countries other than the United States and their knowledge of English is almost non-existent. The third group who is new on the scene is a group of students from a school that previously had the same philosophical basis as the writer's school but, because of a

distinct shift in the school's orientation, students who have attended the school for several years are now forced to find education elsewhere. These students come to the school with a feeling of loss and with a negative attitude prior to the start of school.

All of these students can be classified as at-risk. These are students who may not feel socially accepted and many of them may not meet the academic challenges of the nine core classes they must take each day. The student coming to the school may or may not have the academic or social skills to adjust to the rigorous curriculum and staid environment. Many of these students have had problems in their previous school and carry these problems with them to this school's surroundings.

Many of the students entering the school and some who are currently enrolled lack study skills to enable them to cope with the nine subjects they will be taking during the school day. The student who falls into this category is often overwhelmed by the number of courses and the amount of homework assigned each night. Many of the seventh graders feel inundated by the amount of material presented each day. For all seventh graders the nine course curriculum in new to them as sixth graders do not follow the same format as secondary school children. The lack of familiarity with such a demanding program is often a contributing factor in the development of a negative self image that frequently

leads to a poor selection of friends and thus adds to the likelihood of a student being unsuccessful in school.

Another problem evident among new students as well as some of the current student population is a lack of socialization skills which often results in the indiscriminate choice of friends. The student who does not know how to go about making friends frequently will join any group that will accept him. The easiest group to join is the outcasts of the school because it has little criteria for acceptance, this group is usually the fringe group; the students who will accept anyone because they themselves have not been accepted.

As a result of an absence of acceptance into the social or academic structure of the school the student is dissatisfied. This attitude negatively affects the behavior and the academic success of the student. Many of the students who have transferred into the school do not remain for over one year and social reasons are a contributing factor to each student's desire to leave.

This lack of any defined program to aid students in social and academic areas has produced educational, emotional as well as social problems resulting in a decline in the individual grades of the student and a decline in the total enrollment of the secondary school. Students feel isolated and unsure of themselves and this writer often hears students complain of the cold reception they received

as one of the factors in their decision to leave the school, improper placement is another reason along with the difficulty of the courses as a third reason for leaving.

The administration recognizes the problem but feels at a loss as to how to go about dealing with such a complicated situation. It is the belief of this writer that a program needs to be instituted to aid students in educational and social maturation.

In conclusion, the problem addressed by this practicum is that there is a group of students in this writer's school who can be classified as at-risk and that there is a distinct chance that these students are destined to fail both academically and socially. This failure often results in students who fall into the growing statistical data reflecting the ever increasing drop out rate.

Problem Documentation

In order to provide documentation for the problem cited in the previous section the writer reviewed statistical data on students who withdrew from the school as seen in Figure 1. The writer also spoke to students who did not re-register for the following year in school.

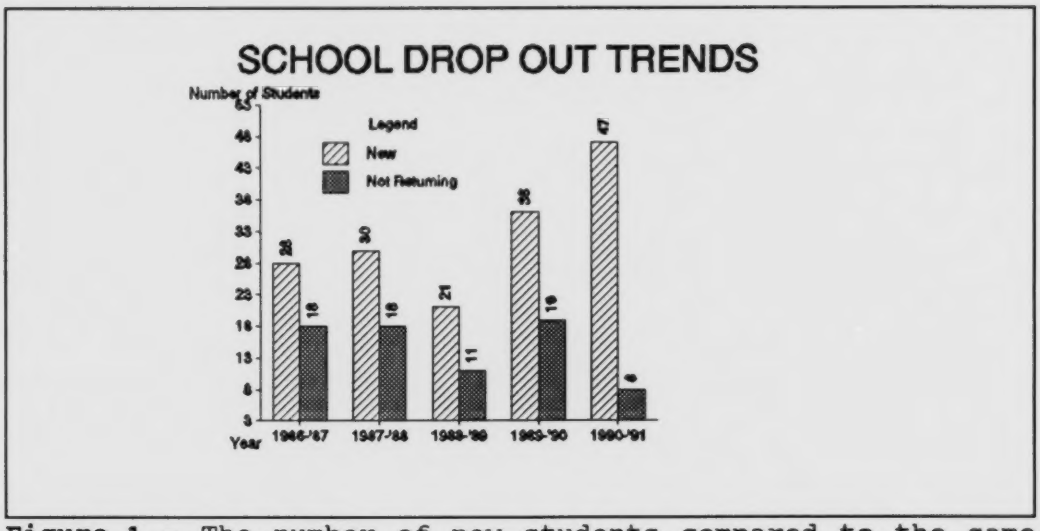

Figure 1 - The number of new students compared to the same group not returning

In the past three years over half of the new students enrolled in grades seven, eight and nine have not returned the following year. This is a loss of over fifty students, some of whom would certainly have added to the academic as well as social structure of the school. The financial loss is also a key factor. Figure 1 illustrates the number of students in grades 7, 8 and 9 who have left the school after one year in attendance.

Students and teachers within the school were questioned concerning the problems faced by new as well as current students. The teachers cited a lack of study skills, the students' inability to know what and how to

study as a key factor in failure. The students keyed in on another area of difficulty; knowing who to go to with a problem and the obstacle in making friends with students who had been together since pre-kindergarten. Figure 2 indicates the reasons given by over sixty students when questioned about leaving.

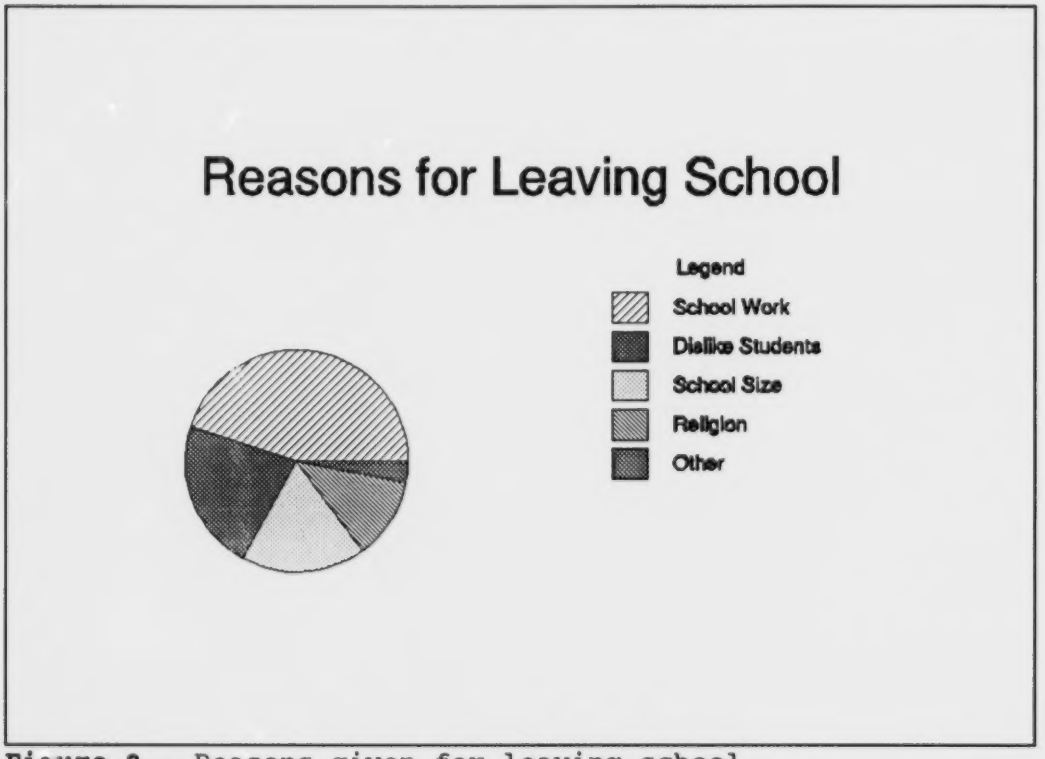

Figure 2 - Reasons given for leaving school

Twenty-seven students cited the amount of work in the school as a prime reason for leaving. Thirteen cited other students with the size of the school given by eleven students surveyed as their chief reason for leaving. Seven students cited the amount of religion in the school as a

factor and three of the students said that moving, teachers, or rules were their reasons for leaving.

The influx of students into the school has never been handled in any orderly fashion. There has never been a program to aid students in integrating into the existing social and educational program within the school. Students enter the school, are given their schedule of classes and sent on their way. Frequently the students do not even know where the classrooms are located. Many students enter the school without records and placement in the proper class is often difficult, as a result of this numerous students need schedule changes and do not even know the process used to accomplish this task. It is noted by this writer that many of the new students feel overwhelmed by this process and feel lost and confused. The younger student frequently goes to his or her parent who, in turn, calls the school to find out the procedure. The older student relies on friends for the information and frequently that takes an inordinate amount of time.

Another factor in the loss of students to the school is the failure rate among those students leaving the school. This writer examined the records of the students who left the school and there was a bimodal distribution. Two groups were quite different in their scholastic records; twenty-five of the sixty students who had left the school had multiple failures for year end grades. Seven students had

more D than C grades at the end of the year. These thirty-two students in grades 7, 8 and 9 were not performing at their ability levels as shown by their California Achievement Tests. This is another indication of the need for some type of program designed to aid the student in acquiring the skills he needs to perform at the level consistent with his capabilities.

In this writer's school students who arrived at the school and than left the school frequently did not finish high school. A pattern of change and avoid had been established. Of the thirty new students who enrolled for the 1988-89 school year only five remained in the school for the 1989-90 school year. Of the twenty-five who left twelve are attending a third school for the 1990-91 school year. Hahn (1987) states that the drop out rate in high school threatens the economy as well as the productivity of the nation, not counting the waste to lives of the individuals who choose to leave school.

Causative Analysis

The problem of school drop outs and the at-risk student has many causes and no one cause can be seen clearly as the dominant factor in a child leaving the school and the

possibility of that student not finishing his high school career.

One of the most significant causes of this problem, within this writer's work setting is the lack of any program to help the student who can be classified as at-risk. Every faculty member agrees that there is a need for such a program but no one has the time nor the inclination to set up such a program. All teachers teach seven classes per day and most have seven preparations for these classes. Teachers are given two thirty minute breaks per day and their lunch hours are not duty free. Thus the likelihood of a teacher taking his own time to prepare a program geared to study skills as well as teach such a program is not probable.

Another cause of the problem is the current social structure of the school. Most of the students in the school have been together since pre-kindergarten and for a new student to break into the existing social structure is difficult. Frequently new students will find friends among other new students and these friendships stand outside of existing social groups.

The administration places a low priority on school orientation and on study skills. The administrators believe that students acquire these skills naturally and that a class in study skill is a frill that this private school can little afford.

Money is a motivating factor and the cost of such a program can be prohibitive. The curriculum that must be covered during the school year is extensive, thus the addition of a study skills program to the existing course content is frowned upon.

Related Literature

The literature indicates that students at-risk fall into many categories and that the term at-risk is actually a term that can be applied to any student who is likely to drop out.

Whitehead (1989) reported what he referred to as a "shameful legacy" concerning Florida's youth. He stated that the drop out rate in Florida is the highest in the nation and that one in three ninth graders do not graduate from high school. He also stated that of the over 2.9 million children living in Florida under the age of 18, 41,000 dropped out of school. This writer's private school seems no exception to this statistic, of the thirty-one ninth graders enrolled in the school five years ago four did not finish high school and one is currently enrolled in night school in order to earn his diploma.

Green and Baker (1986) discuss the growing problem of the at-risk student. The statistics cited by the authors support the fact that one in four students will not finish

high school and that this is a growing problem. They state that the concern over this problem is not new; however, they cite the loss of one quarter of the future generations to a society that is growing technologically as almost devastating both to the nation and to the individual. Monetary, and psychological costs to the nation are growing and have added to the urgency of this problem. The authors indicate the above as factors related to the increased attention the at-risk student is receiving both in literature and in statistical investigation. The authors further state that the investigation is done on who drops out, why they drop out but little is done concerning the programs used to help keep the potential dropout in the school. The report goes on to explain the promising practices that have been undertaken for the at-risk student and those practices will be dealt with later in this practicum.

Rumberger (1983) asserts that the tide of change, that is the fact that more students were finishing school has seen a dramatic shift in recent years. He states that originally the typical at-risk student was one who lived in the inner city and came from a low socioeconomic background. That is no longer the fact according to his findings, the increase in statistics come from the white middle-class. The percentage of increase among whites has almost risen by one third. This increase is alarming as these individuals

are destined to be an economic drain on an already shaky economy. The reasons given for dropping out of school range from psychological factors to economic reasons. Rumberger (1983) contends that there are a number of underlying reasons why a student leaves school from the fact that he is not encouraged to finish to the need for money. The characteristics of a student likely to drop out are readily described by Rumberger. The typical student is below average in levels of academic ability as compared to others of his age. The typical student also displays social skills that are poorly developed and a poor sense of self confidence.

Rumberger's (1983) in depth study clearly stresses the difficulty in portraying the typical at-risk student yet his study takes the variables into consideration and is a valid portrayal of the type of student who is in most danger of not finishing his education. The three main factors dealt with in this study were environmental and psychological, along with family background as indicators. Rumberger concludes by stating the obvious that the drop out problem is complex and critical.

Hoover (1989) identified over thirty characteristics of the at-risk student. Of the thirty characteristics poor grades, a feeling of being different and attendance at multiple schools were on his list; other items, such as

being in a home with a single parent or placed in foster care were also on the list.

According to Bhaerman and Kopp (1988) "individual drop out patterns are set way before ninth grade" (p.3) because of this fact the authors advocate the intervention process begin as early as possible. The earlier the process the more likely one is to meet success. They cite the differing statistics available concerning drop outs and believe that statistics are not the issue the problem is the issue and no one will deny that there is a serious problem with the at-risk student. According to their statistics Florida ranked fifth highest in the number of drop outs. They cite no single factor that identifies a potential drop out and seem to agree with others in the field. Most researchers agree that a combination of factors social, scholastic, and economic are all interrelated as indicators of who is at-risk. The solution to the problem according to the writers rests with the individual school and its ability to use specific programs within the constraints of that particular institution. The question they pose is that should a program of intervention be concentrated on the changing of the school or the changing of the student's pattern of behavior. Their conclusion is that both areas need to be utilized in order to help correct the problem. They discuss student motivation, discipline and attitude, all as factors related to the drop out problem. Their research

into the reasons students leave school parrot other researchers and nothing new can be found in their causative analysis; however, some of the methods they suggest are important and will be cited later.

Hayes (1987) offered a guide for the identification of students who could be classified as at-risk. The form he presented was designed to be used by administrators, counselors and teachers. It lists twenty-six statements to be filled out by the appropriate person and recommended that the form be used as a guide in identification of probable at-risk students. Items on the form include information dealing with topics such as attendance, academic standing and social interaction.

Calabrese (1989) discusses the changing perception of the school itself as a contributing factor in the decision to drop out of school. Calabrese states that the function of the school seems to have changed as it has narrowed to the teaching of academics with the elimination of other areas. The result of this narrowing has been the alienation of students. If students do not feel a part of the institution than they are able to leave it without a backward glance. The author believes that schools should attempt to create a bond between the student and the school; this bond would than create a reduction in the feeling of alienation that is growing among many students. The result

of all of this, according to the author is an increase in productivity of the student and greater achievement levels.

To achieve this goal there are four steps suggested by Calabrese (1989). The first step is to develop an atmosphere where the student feels he can go to administrators and teachers to express a concern. The second factor is to have students and teachers work toward mutual goals thus creating a feeling of partnership. The third step in the process is to include students' attitudes and opinions when decisions are being made. Finally, there should be some form of arbitration or method the student can use if decisions that are made seem unjust.

Becoming a part of the environment in which one spends most of his time is necessary if alienation is to be avoided. This writer feels that this is an understatement but many schools administrators would feel threatened by such a process. Other writers in the field of at-risk study point to the feeling of alienation as a factor in student withdrawal from school.

Bryk and Meng (1989) explore the school organization as a factor in drop out statistics. They cite research that documents both the common characteristics of the drop out and the differing characteristics of schools that affect the behavior of the potential drop out. Their concentration of study was in the area of absenteeism. According to the authors common characteristics of drop outs are that they

have lower grades and score lower on standardized tests, their absence rate is higher than that of other students, they do not do a majority of their homework and they tend to be described as discipline problems. In a general sense they are set apart from the atmosphere of the school.

Bryk and Meng (1989) cite the factors of school type as a contributor in the drop out rate. They explain that the drop out rate in Catholic schools is much lower and there seems to be an ability in these schools to control discipline problems.

The prime characteristics of the Catholic school as depicted by the authors is a structured environment, with commonality among students and parents. Chronic truancy is not allowed and the students are more involved in their academic pursuits.

Bryk and Meng (1989) conclude that the structure of the school is important in decreasing the drop out rate. Absenteeism, orderly social environment, and commonality among the students are all part of the environmental structure that facilitates a positive environment conducive to encouraging students to remain within the school till graduation.

The authors go on to state that no single factor of a school is more or less important than any other factor. A total environment for education must be maintained. The authors conclusions are that the structure and internal

organization of a school can have a significant impact on the at-risk student.

The lower number of drop outs from a Catholic school can also be explained by the fact that the private school often asks problematic students to leave. If a child is truant and has multiple failures the child is asked to leave. These factors are not dealt with by Bryk and Meng (1989) in presenting their analysis of the status of drop outs in the private sector. These factors must also be considered when analyzing any situation of this type.

Wheelock and Dorman (1988) explore the reasons students drop out along with practices that may positively affect the potential drop out. They begin by citing some of the same statistics cited by all other researchers in this area. Concluding that the drop out rate is a serious problem within our society. The typical drop out is one who comes from a low socioeconomic background whose parents did not and do not place much emphasis on education. They cite schools themselves as the key ingredient in keeping students. They agree with Calabrese (1989) in his assessment that schools can make a difference in the commitment by the student to remain in school. These authors believe that the schools can determine if a student is to drop or remain. Concern for the individual plays an important part in this scenario as does relevance. These authors do not discount the importance of specific skills

but maintain that skills alone are not the overriding factors in causing students to remain within the school system.

Conrath (1988) presents information related to the changing environment in which most of today's children live. He believes that the schools are not responsive to the needs of the children they serve. This lack of responsiveness, according to Conrath, is a contributing factor to the ever increasing drop out rate that is occurring nationwide. He states that schools "It is time to incorporate what we know about at-risk youngsters into our action plans." (36) He states that a prevention program is more important than a program that deals primarily with the extreme problem after it arises. His contention is that a program should begin in the primary schools rather than in the secondary school. He is against the idea of specialized schools which cater to the at-risk student; he does not believe in patronizing the student. He also believes that homework is a negative as many homes are not conducive to a homework environment.

O'Sullivan (1989) assessed various methods for identification of the at-risk student. Her conclusions state that there is a way to predict with a great deal of accuracy, which children would be likely to receive grades of F. Failure increases the likelihood of dropping out prior to high school graduation. O'Sullivan states that teachers recommendations, behavioral referrals and

attendance records are of utmost importance in identification. She also said that each school should research its own record of failure to determine who is at risk in that particular setting.

Slavin and Madden (1989) identify factors related to the at-risk student and they define the characteristics of who is at-risk. The authors reviewed related research and discussed program values and effectiveness. Their conclusions stressed an all encompassing program that emphasized prevention rather than remediation. However, they did advocate the use of remediation if that was all that was left to the educator. Their research presented facts related to the pre-school child as well as the older adolescent. One of the ideas presented by these two writers was the use of team learning and of students to aid other students. One of the important aspects of any program according to Slavin and Madden was evaluation and modification on a continuous cycle as the mainstay of any successful program.

Hammons and Olson (1988) discuss the relevance of school transfer as it related to the at-risk student. The author's state that there is a positive relationship between the transferring of a student from one school to another and graduation. The findings indicate that students who transferred often missed their initial graduation date. According to the authors the relationship between transfer

and dropping out of school is great and should be considered as an indication of a potential at-risk student.

Investigation also indicated that students with poor skills who remained within the same institution graduated with their class while students in the same category who changed schools did not do so at the same rate thus supporting the author's belief that there is a relationship between school transfer and drop out rate.

The assumption that school transfer plays a significant role in identification of the at-risk child is a point of view held by many in the field of drop out prevention. Students who transfer schools usually leave for social or academic reasons and those reasons are frequently carried with them to their new environment.

Kronick, Morton, Peterson and Smith (1988) list typical behaviors associated with the at-risk student. Among the items cited are poor attendance, lack of involvement in school related activities, and a lack of social skills. The deficiency of social skills according to these authors is a contributing factor to the gifted student dropping out to school The statistics cited by these authors is that 10% of the drop outs are gifted, students who lack social skills in order to aid them in fitting into the existing social structure of the school. The last characteristic pointed to by these authors is the part of the country in which the child lives. Florida is a state that holds the dubious

distinction of being among the states with one of the highest amount of drop out percentages.

The literature points to many factors that influence a student to drop out of school and indicates early identification as a key ingredient in keeping potential drop outs in school. Researchers do not agree on the numbers nor on the factors in identification of the at-risk student; but they all agree that there is a serious problem, one that must be dealt with in every school.

CHAPTER III

ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES AND EVALUATION INSTRUMENTS

Statement of General Goals

Every school has a responsibility to educate each student to the best of his ability. The goal of this practicum is to significantly alter the statistics concerning at-risk students within the writer's educational institution. The goals of this practicum will be to facilitate academic and personal growth and to increase self confidence in the identified group.

Behavioral Expectations

The literature disclosed a variety of suggestions and techniques to aid the at-risk student in better coping with the stress connected with the educational situation. This writer chose the specific behavioral objectives based on this information; the goals of this practicum were measured by four specific behavioral objectives.

Concluding Objectives

Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in self-confidence and social skills among the targeted students as measured by a questionnaire given at three different times to the students involved in this practicum.

Over a period of eight months administration and faculty will become sensitized to the problems of students in the school resulting in the inception of programs designed to deal with the various problems exhibited by the students.

Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in academic performance among the targeted students as measured by productivity such as class work, homework turned in, class participation and interaction with other students. Individual weekly evaluations of the students will be done by their teachers and will be used to measure this objective.

Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in attitude toward school as a result of improved study skills as measured by observation along with an increase in mean score on a teacher made questionnaire to be given at three different times during the implementation period.

Evaluation Instruments

In the planning of any long term project unexpected events are likely to occur. To provide for this possibility this writer kept a weekly log of the events concerning the targeted group (see Appendix A). The log contained comments from teachers and students involved in the program and positive and negative comments connected with individual students as well as projects undertaken. These weekly logs were reviewed and compiled in order to correct or modify unexpected events.

The first objective was measured by a student self evaluation (see Appendix B). This instrument was chosen because when assessing self concept the individual student must be the prime factor in analysis. Researchers agree that self concept plays an important part in the lives of the potential drop out. The questionnaire used was designed by Dager (1968); most of the questions and the form itself closely matched that designed by Dager. The questionnaire contained questions concerning social skills as indicators of self confidence and was given to the students at the

start of the program and half way through the program as well as at the end of the implementation period.

The second objective was measured by the importance placed on the instituting of new programs to deal with the various problems exhibited by the students and the instituting of these programs. The commitment to time and personnel is essential to the success of any new program and this commitment is a good indicator of the level of importance placed on any new program.

The third objective was measured by student productivity as that is a key factor in academic performance. Homework as well as class participation are key factors in productivity and that is why teacher evaluation (see Appendix C) and records were chosen as the method of measuring this objective. Productivity is often an indicator of involvement in the learning process. Involvement is another area cited by researchers as an indicator of student success within the educational setting. Students brought rating cards home and parents provided reinforcement for positive ratings on the card.

The fourth objective was measured by a questionnaire given at the start of the program and again in the middle of the program and finally at the termination of the program

(see Appendix D). This questionnaire measured the attitude of the students toward school and their feelings toward the study skills they have learned as well as the social environment of the school. Researchers state that social acceptance and the skills needed to be productive are also key factors in dealing with the at-risk student. The form used closely followed the form designed by Dager (1968), with additional questions taken from Christen and Murphy (1985).

It was important that the results of the implementation of this practicum be clearly analyzed. To accomplish this the first objective was determined to be successful when the mean score on the questionnaire increased.

Success of the second objective was determined by the funding of an orientation program at the start of the new school year. Success of this objective was also determined by increased teacher participation in an advisor program aimed at the at-risk student.

Success of the third objective was determined by the positive effect on the work submitted by the targeted group. Rating cards allowed for teacher input regarding observable behavior. Positive teacher ratings of the targeted students was an indication of the success of this objective.

Success of the fourth objective was determined by an increase in the mean score in the three administrations of a questionnaire. The increase in the attitude of the students toward school was an indication that the third objective was met.

CHAPTER IV

SOLUTION STRATEGY

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The primary problem was to devise a program to address the myriad of problems faced by the at-risk student. The literature revealed many solutions to the problem and each solution entailed individualization as one of the key factors in dealing with the at-risk student as no one criteria is evidenced by every student considered at-risk.

The problem was to devise a program to meet the needs of the at-risk student by increasing their self-confidence, elevating their academic performance and improving their attitude toward school through the development of good study skills.

Nattermann (1988) suggests the use of teachers as advisers in conjunction with the guidance department. In this writer's school many teachers are not available but a program that uses peers as counselors under the direction of the counselor as well as teachers was used as a modification of the Nattermann program. The instruction of teachers was held after school as there was a program in place that encouraged teachers to take courses that positively impact the school environment. This program paid the teacher for

attendance; however, the classes were not eligible for credit in state re-licensing. A peer counseling program was already in place and was used in conjunction with the teachers to implement the Nattermann approach.

Wheelock and Dorman (1988) discuss the role of middle school guidance as a preventative measure rather than a crisis intervention procedure. The years of early adolescent are filled with affective as well as cognitive changes and these dimensions must be dealt with; this is true for all students. The authors suggest the schools make choices concerning the importance of specific learning modalities as one way schools can positively affect the students. The incorporation of learning strategies into the curriculum of the middle school and hopefully into the primary school was a major emphasis of this practicum. The literature stresses the importance of study skills for all students not just at-risk students. Other areas of modification presented by these authors were not suitable to this writer's situation or they were next to impossible to institute within this particular educational situation.

Green and Baker (1986) also present promising practices to aid the at-risk student. Among these practices are a study skills program to enhance skills, concentrating on the development of a positive self-concept, an emphasis on work study habits, and aid in developing interpersonal skills. These areas are all cited by other authors as areas of

concentration in order to develop a program that will be effective for the at-risk student. Teachers and students were involved in this program as their involvement was necessary in the understanding of the potential at-risk student.

After reviewing literature the components of a successful program should also include a wide variety of support services according to Green and Baker (1986). The practices suggested by the literature search by the authors is consistent with other suggestions presented by other writers and researchers in the field of at-risk. Methodology to accomplish these tasks was not presented by the authors.

Slezak and Bils (1988) developed a project that consisted of three elements. A summer session for incoming students, a study skills element during the school year and a parent involvement night. They also stated that each of these elements could be implemented independently and that one does not rely on the other. Their success with the three pronged approach was evident in that failure "dropped by 31 percent" (p.111). The study skills component was instituted within the English Department and implemented at the start of school to the entire student body. Supplementary material was than used to aid students within the designated groups. Peer counselors acted as teacher aids in this element of the program.

Uhlmann (1988) also advocated the use of support groups in dealing with the at-risk student. He states that inservice training is an important aspect of any such program. Such training became a basic part of the peer counseling and teacher aspect of the program; peer counselors were carefully screened prior to selection into the program.

Elias and Clabby (1988) present an eight step approach to the decision making process. They believe this process is important in dealing with the many social situations that are presented to both adolescent and adult. This strategy was introduced to the identified students involved in the program. Groups were set up to deal with problems unique to each grade level. These groups were run by this writer with the aid of the peer counselors.

Van Sciver (1988) discussed a plan implemented at W. T. Chipman Junior High School to aid the at-risk student. This plan involved volunteer teachers who dealt with no more than two students. There were four parts to the program. The first part was to identify the student. Next some form of intervention course was implemented followed by a term of action set and finally by some sort of evaluation. According to Van Sciver the students in the program improved their grades as well as their attitudes toward self and school.

Elias and Clabby (1988) discuss the importance of teaching students what they refer to as the "hidden curriculum" that of the ability to socialize. The authors stress the importance of this skill in developing a complete human being. They cite references to data that supports their contention that socialization skills are as important as other domains taught within the school. Elias and Clabby also refer to the development of the skill of decision making as one that is essential for the at-risk student. Both of these elements were incorporated into the group portion of the program. The group process was used to deal with the information suggested by these writers.

The project designed by Elias and Clabby (1988) centered around five main elements. The first one is to teach the student in an ordered fashion a series of skills increasing in difficulty related to problem solving techniques. Second, the center of the situations presented to the students should be relevant to the particular age of the student being taught. The third aspect of the project is to provide for the student a logical educational basis as a reinforcement technique. The fourth principle that governs this program, according to its authors, is that the program should be wide enough in scope to be able to be used at any age and in any situation. The last element is practice this should be available to enable the students to

sharpen the skills they have acquired in the decision making process.

Elias and Clabby (1988) then present eight steps in the process itself. The teaching of these eight steps and the practice the authors advocate are presented. The authors believe that the process is one that is an essential part of any school structure and should be taught to augment the cognitive aspects of education.

The teaching of a decision making process, at first, seems to be something one need not teach till closer investigation reveals that this process is indeed necessary and the lack of practice in this very process could be a contribution factor to student failure. If a person does not know how to go about making decisions than there is a likelihood that the decisions being made are not done with any thoughtful process but purely through random chance. The spur of the moment decision is often one that can lead a person into problematic situations. As simple as the task first seems it was evident that the teaching of study skills should become a part of any at-risk program and these skills became part of this program.

Sweers (1988) presents a case for using the Socratic method in teaching students. Sweers asserts that the student should be led through a series of questions to enable him to understand his own stand on a particular issue. This enables the student to begin a form of self

examination. The author refers this method to classroom situations and the use of textual material is indicated. Her belief is that the student will be able to improve his life and in the end become a better individual.

Sweers presentation of the Socratic method has been advocated by many and yet for a seventh or eighth grader such a method may require of the more than they are able to deliver. Some form of self discovery is necessary to aid any individual into finding out why he does what he does; however, the Socratic method used in a classroom situation does not seem realistic and could cause more problems that it could cure. Sweers does not present any statistical evidence to support her claims but presents her ideas as theory and not set into practice, except in abstract. The use of this method by this writer in dealing with the targeted students involved in the practicum was limited.

Alderman (1990) presents a procedure for helping students to learn to think for themselves. The author believes that the ability to attach success to the student's individual effort and accomplishments is central to a feeling of self worth necessary for the retention of the at-risk student. Success is not the only answer to the problem for these students according to the author but the knowledge that his success was not by chance but because of what the student himself did and how he did it. The author contends that some students do not link success to particular actions

and this must be emphasized if the student is to continue a pattern of behavior that will help to raise self esteem. The determinant according to this author is to help students understand that they are the key to their success as well as to their failure. She suggests that there are four elements to this approach. The setting of individual goals, the understanding of the elements of learning, and success itself. The fourth step in the process is to guide the student into awareness that his individual effort is the reason for his success. The role of the teacher is to convey to the student why he failed or succeeded in his particular task. This last step reinforces for the student his own participation in the learning process. This approach was taught to the teachers in the evening classes as one method of reaching the at-risk student and was constantly reinforced by the approval and discussions from teachers. The group sessions were also be used to reinforce these procedures. This writer believes that the belief in one's own effort is an essential ingredient to any form of success. If a student knows what he has done to succeed he is likely to repeat the same action as a precursor to achievement; all literature on the at-risk student advocated success as a primary factor in retention of students.

Seldin (1989) presents strategies that will positively affect the alienated student. His strategies are designed

to work in a short period of time and according to the author "have long-term impact on students, teachers, and administrators" (p.77). He recommends a five step procedure beginning with the philosophical basis under which the school operates. He suggests that the school review the philosophies annually with the help of students and that this shared experience will aid in decreasing feelings of alienation. The second step in the procedure is the student involvement in decision making. The third element of Seldin's strategy is the formation of a place where students can share their concerns and discuss areas of importance. This third area is one that this writer successfully incorporated into the at-risk program. Steps four and five deal with the community and teachers as integral parts of any program to decrease the feeling of alienation. Both areas must be happy with the school and these shared positive feelings will be passed on to the students within a particular institution. Seldin's five steps have no statistical data to support the ideas he presents they are just ideas that this writer feels will aid in decreasing alienation. Alienation has also been cited as a factor to be considered in dealing with the at-risk student.

Bhaerman and Kopp (1988) list several areas that must be dealt with in any at-risk program the building of self-esteem, the establishment of an advisor/advisee program and group counseling all are cited as critical elements in the

establishment of any program that will be effective. The extensive amount of research adds credibility to the ideas presented by these writers. The components of a successful program according to the authors are the creation of a sense of belonging to the school a "bonding". The second component is academic in nature; the strengthening of skills to enable the student to cope with the curriculum being taught. Finally, the last element of the program is self-esteem. The dealing with socialization, decision making and self awareness activities. In depth research was conducted to support all of these elements in a study the was comprehensive in nature. These authors present a composite picture of a complete at-risk program one that in some form should be instituted in every school.

Haws and Lovell (1989) also promote the formation of support groups to aid students with self-identification problems. Their report contains guidelines for the groups, twenty activities and a list of twenty characteristics that can be used in identification of the potential at-risk student.

Helge (1989) reported on a project to aid students with increasing their self-esteem. The project concentrated on several areas and the result was not only that self-esteem increased but as a side factor grades increased and truancy decreased. Thus the project supports contentions that self esteem can positively affect success in schools. This is

one of the reasons this writer selected the ares of self-esteem as a dominant behavioral objective in this pracitcum. The statistics and research presented by numerous researchers in the field and the presentation of facts presented by Helge all reinforce this area of concentration as one that should be of utmost importance in the establishment of any at-risk program.

Description of Selected Solutions

The selection of specific strategies was predicated on the research studied. Helge (1988) and Sweers (1988) both emphasize self-esteem as a key factor in dealing with the at-risk student. Bhaerman and Kopp (1988), Alderman (1990), and Green and Baker (1986) present strong cases for the emphasis on a positive self-concept as key factors to success. The literature suggests that the learning of social skills Green and Baker (1986) is necessary and Bhaerman and Kopp (1988) suggest an advisor/advisee program be used in any at-risk program.

The second area of concentration is the teaching of study skills, and learning strategies. These areas are mentioned by Wheelock and Dorman (1988), Green and Baker (1986), Slezak and Bils (1988) and Elias and Clabby (1988). These researchers all advocate learning strategies along with decision making as necessary elements in any at-risk program.

Nattermann (1988), Uhlmann (1988), and Van Sciver (1988) all suggest the formation of support groups and the use of teacher advisors as a method in dealing with the at-risk student, and as a way of implementing such a program.

These researchers present realistic approaches and suggestions in the formation of an at-risk program and this writer implemented many of their suggestions.

Report of Action Taken

The first step in the program was the identification of the students. This was done in teacher meetings and on an informal as well as written basis by the teachers (see Appendix E). A total of 35 students was suggested for the program. After a student's name was submitted a meeting with this writer and the student was held to assess the proper procedure to be stressed with each child as individualization is also an important element in any at-risk program.

After the students were targeted, four groups were formed and peer counselors and teacher advisors were assigned. Meetings were held with the peer counselors and the teacher advisors prior to the start of the program. The peer counselors and this writer worked with the four groups concentrating on study skills, learning strategies, social interaction problems, decision making procedures, and other areas that naturally came up during the group sessions. The

groups were primarily divided along grade lines. There was one group for each grade. The fourth group consisted of students in grades 7 and 8 who displayed discipline problems as well as academic problems.

Prior to the students being placed in the program, parents were contacted to elicit their support. A meeting was called to inform the parents of the individual teacher's role and an explanation of the rating card was given.

In service classes were held to aid teachers in the instruction of study skills procedures. Learning strategies were also incorporated into classes and reinforced within the groups. Learning strategies were taught to all classes in grades seven and eight. Teachers used their disciplines to teach specific strategies such as memorization techniques, mapping, and note taking skills.

In August, a new student orientation program was begun emphasizing study skills and decision making along with information concerning the procedures in the school. This summer session was held for two groups. The incoming 7th-grade students were in one group and all students new to the school in grades 8 and 9 were in the second group.

At the start of school 30 of the 35 students involved in the program returned. Each group met independently to discuss the summer and review instructional strategies that had been presented. The groups were given the opportunity to discuss and reassess the previous year's group and to

present ideas that may be of interest as the year progressed. The new 10th-grade students appeared more serious then previously noted. The new 9th-graders were excited about being in high school and were concerned about note taking and study habits. The incoming 8th-graders had a laid back attitude and seemed to feel that they no longer needed help.

New groups were formed and teacher advisors were assigned. Many of the new 10th-graders who had been in the program the previous year volunteered to work with the new students and to discuss the problems they had encountered. The 8th-graders, did not express any interest in helping out the new students. They concentrated on their own studies and asked for help in specific areas, especially review of the decision making process. Groups, new and old, continued through the first semester.

The program lasted a total of eight months and as time progressed parents became less involved and peer counselors began to meet with individual students at times other than in group meetings. The group meetings continued throughout the eight month period with study skills, decision making and social interaction the focus of the meetings.

Frequent meetings were held with teachers to discuss the progress of individual students. This was a major area of concentration as problems were addressed as soon as they became evident. Counseling sessions were held with this

writer at least twice a month. These sessions emphasized self esteem, social interaction and the development of interpersonal skills. This individualism created a bonding with this writer and many of the students in the program.

The teacher advisors were assigned to students based on the students' preference. The students were given a list of teachers from which to select a teacher advisor, most students received their first choice causing some teachers to have three students assigned to them and others to have only one student to advise. The teachers kept in contact with the students on a weekly basis and dealt primarily with academic problems. Learning strategies and tutorials became primary functions of the teacher advisors.

The areas of concentration were independent of each other yet they all were geared to the same goal. The lessening of the effects of alienation and the building of skills along with an increase in self-esteem were the concentrated goals of both the old and new groups.

CHAPTER V

RESULTS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results

Objective One was measured by a teacher-made questionnaire given at three different times during this practicum (see Appendix B). The specific objective, "Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in self-confidence and social skills among the targeted students as measured by a questionnaire given at three different times to the students involved in this practicum," was met by 28 of the 35 student involved.

Every student did not display a significant increase in self-esteem as a few of the students expressed a positive attitude toward themselves from the start of the program. This positive attitude was evident on the questionnaires but not evident in one to one discussions with the students (see Appendix F). It appeared that when the student was filling out the questionnaire he expressed a form of bravado not displayed during the individual counseling sessions. The student became more candid during the counseling sessions often stating that there was a difference

between what was expressed on the questionnaire and what was honestly felt. When questioned about this feeling some students shrugged their shoulders and some said they had not taken the initial questionnaire seriously. It became evident that there was a need to feel good about oneself especially because of the school related problems that existed within the group. It was easier to express negative feelings in a counseling session once trust had been established with the counselor.

Table 1 Initial Responses to Questionnaire

Question #	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	15	16	4	
2	12	16	7	
3		7	16	12
4	9	11	14	1
5		2	12	21
6		8	23	4
7	2	16	13	4
8	4	13	15	3
9	10	15	7	3
10	4	24	7	

Table 1 summarizes the responses to the first administration of the questionnaire. The question statements and the number of students responding are

presented in Appendix F. Over twenty-eight of the students indicated that they felt that they had good qualities and were people of value as seen by the responses to questions 1 and 2 in Table 1. About half of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed with Question 4 "I am able to do things as well as most other people". This was in distinct contrast to the position stated when answering the first two questions. When asked if they take a positive attitude toward themselves (Question 6), 27 of the students gave negative responses. The responses to the first questionnaire were split between what the students felt or thought they should feel.

The results of the second administration of the questionnaire (see Appendix G) were different from the initial responses. The students continued to responded positively about themselves. Question 4, dealing with the students' ability to do things as well as others, resulted in more positive responses than when first answered. Question 6 concerning a positive attitude toward oneself drew 4 more positive responses than had previously been given.

At the end of eight months, the questionnaire was administered for a final time (see Appendix H). All of the students expressed the belief that they were people of worth and had good qualities. Table 2 illustrates

the results of the administration of the final questionnaire. When responding to question 4 all students reported that they were able to do things as well as others, and all but two students felt that they had a positive self image. All of the students responded negatively to Question 10. "At times I think I am no good at all." This was a drastic change from the initial responses where over 20 students had agreed with that statement. The results of the questionnaire (See Appendix H) clearly indicate that there was a positive change in the self image of the students involved in the program.

Table 2- Final Administration of Questionnaire

Question #	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1	18	12		
2	20	10		
3		2	8	10
4	17	13		
5		2	17	11
6	11	17	2	
7	18	12		
8	1	9	15	5
9		5	18	7
10			13	17

Objective Two was measured by the response of the faculty and administration to the problems of the targeted group. Response is a good indication of the seriousness attributed to a particular problem. The specific objective, "Over a period of eight months administration and faculty will become sensitized to the problems of students in the school resulting in the inception of programs designed to deal with the various problems exhibited by the students," was met; several programs have been integrated into the existing framework of the school.

A teacher advisor program has been placed into the teacher's handbook; this program allows students to select a teacher who they feel will be able to aid them with any problems. Advisors are chosen from a list of teachers who have agreed to serve as advisors. In addition at the start of the school year teachers were given a three day seminar in the teaching of learning strategies. The strategies presented at the in-service workshops were designed to aid teachers with the teaching of learning strategies helpful to all the students. The student handbook also includes a section on notebook organization and required materials needed for classes. The description of notebook organization was given to every seventh and eighth grade student. Teachers are required to check the notebooks of all

students five times during the school year. Finally, all new students participated in an orientation session introducing them to the school at the same time they were assigned an older student as a big brother or sister to aid in any problems that they may encounter.

The Third objective was measured by an increase in the academic performance among the targeted students. The specific objective, "Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in academic performance among the targeted students as measured by productivity such as class work, homework turned in, class participation and interaction with other students," was met by 26 of the 35 students. There was a decrease in the number of failures among the targeted group and an increase in class participation attendance and general attitude.

Rating cards (see Appendix C) along with teacher input and observable student behavior were used to asses the third objective. The rating cards were totaled each week and then an average for each student was calculated. Averages for all students in the same grade were then re-calculated to arrive at a weekly mean score for the grade, and finally a monthly mean was computed.

Students were rated on participation, class work, homework, and interaction with peers. These compiled scores are presented in Table 3.

Table 3-Mean Scores by Grade on Student Rating Cards

Months	1	2	3	4
grade 7	-5.5	-4.5	-3.3	-1.2
grade 8	-6.6	-6.8	-5.0	-5.2
grade 9	-1.2	5.0	10.5	22.0

Students were rated consistently over the four month period. Points were given by teachers indicating a gradual increase in the ratings. As time progressed, the cards were not as closely filled out and both teacher and student seemed to lose interest in the process. Written comments became fewer and teachers began to complain about the time consuming aspect related to the filling out of the cards. After four months the cards were no longer used and teacher input at secondary school faculty meetings began to be the primary source of information concerning student progress. Sessions were also held on individual students if problems seemed to be evident.

In June, all teachers wrote reports on the students involved in the program. The reports were geared to questions concerning attendance, class

participation, and student interaction. The teachers gave positive assessments on twenty-six of the thirty-five students in the program. The reports seemed to cite the similar areas of difficulty and strength. Teachers keyed in on effort and homework; social interaction was commented on by a few of the teachers. In general the teachers gave very favorable reports to a majority of the students. Nine of the thirty-five were cited by at least four of the teachers as still displaying some form of negative behavior.

The number of failing grades decreased from the start of the program. The 12 7th-grade students had over 24 failures collectively when the program began; in June only one student failed two subjects and three others received one failing grade each. Of the 14 8th-grade students four received one failing grade. The nine students in grade nine passed all of their classes.

Five students from the targeted group did not return in September. Of the five, four were considered severe behavior problems. One of the five left because his parents moved to another state; he was not considered a behavior problem. Three of the others left for various reasons and the fourth was asked to leave by the administration.

In the beginning of November, teachers were again

asked to assess the remaining 30 students. At that time all 30 were given favorable ratings by all of their teachers. The students displayed positive study habits and increased social skills; many of them came to this writer to brag about the success they were having in school.

The fourth objective, "Over a period of eight months there will be a significant increase in attitude toward school as a result of improved study skills as measured by observation along with an increase in mean scores on a teacher made questionnaire to be given at three different times during the implementation period." At the start of the program students were given a study habits questionnaire (see Appendix I) to assess their study habits and the study skills training needed. This questionnaire was used to determine areas of concentration.

The results of this questionnaire (see Appendix J) indicated that the students had no formal instruction in note taking, test taking or time management skills. When asked if they felt that it was important to set a regular time for studying only two students responded that this was very important. All 35 of the students stated that they had no specific time set to study nor did they have a system for taking notes.

A second questionnaire was then administered that

required to students to respond to a series of questions either with a "no" or a 'yes" (see Appendix J). Each of the positive responses to the odd questions was given one point and one point was given for a negative response to the even numbered questions. This questionnaire was given at three separate times during the implementation period and the mean results are given in Table 4. Objective four was successfully met as a result of an increase in the mean score for all classes.

Table 4-Mean Scores of Study Habits Questionnaire

GROUP	1st administration	2nd administration	3rd administration
grade 7	7.16	7.41	9.45
grade 8	3.28	3.71	4.83
grade 9	6.44	7.11	9.71
group mean	5.42	5.85	7.66

A selected number of questions are discussed. Question 1, "Do you have a regular schedule for study; a particular time to save for study?" was answered negatively by 30 of the thirty five students responding. In June, the response to the same question resulted in fourteen of the students responding positively. By November 22, students gave positive

responses to this question.

Question 7, "Do you deliberately study and plan to be able to participate in a class discussion?" also was answered negatively by 32 of the 35 students. In June, 16 students responded positively and in November the responses were positive for 26 of the students remaining in the program. The students expressed the belief that class participation helped them learn the material and their class participation also stimulated a wider circle of friends.

The one question that did not seem to elicit a distinct change in behavior was question 11, "Do you concentrate fully when you are studying?" On the initial presentation of the questionnaire all 35 students responded "no". In June, 30 of the 35 students continued to respond in the negative. In November, 23 of the 30 students stated that they did not concentrate fully. They all felt that "fully" was a difficult thing to do and that they all believed that their concentration had increased but still had not increased enough to be classified as "fully".

Conclusions

It is interesting to note that the students felt better about themselves and that they enjoyed success. They seemed to know the importance of study habits yet

were never encouraged to develop positive habits. The one element that seemed to aid the students the most was the group sessions that did not concentrate on learning strategies but on individual worth and values. The groups were a positive influence for these students. They chose to continue them and even volunteer to help others in new groups. Maturity was another factor in the success of the program. It was found by this writer that the older students, the ninth graders, were the most positively affected by the various areas of concentration presented in this practicum.

The emphasis that has been placed on the solving of the problems addressed by this practicum, by the administration is a clear indication that the problems of the students involved in this program were deemed important enough for action to be taken. However, as money is a factor no added remuneration for the added work was given but release time was allotted to teachers involved in the mentor program. The only negative reaction of the administration was the decision not to continue the Peer Counseling program. The feeling was that money could not be allotted for this program and if the teacher and students wanted to donate their time that was fine but there was not money nor would there be release time offered. This decision

basically eliminated the program. In spite of that the reaction to the need of the students in the area of learning strategies and support services was addressed.

The feeling of group strength evident in September surprised this writer. The students seemed to feel that they were special and had shared some important event with each other. They seemed stronger and more determined to succeed than they had previously exhibited.

The success the students had received both in and out of the classroom stimulated a positive self image aiding students with their academics. The 30 remaining students liked each other and more importantly they liked themselves.

Recommendations

This writer has specific recommendations based on results and attitudes expressed by the students. First, the at-risk student should be involved in some sort of group counseling that concentrates on learning strategies as well as interpersonal relationships; a positive self image should be stressed through groups counseling done within each group or on an individual basis. It became evident that self image plays a dominant part in the value a person places on himself. Value clarification and decision making are also

important elements in success and should be dealt with as early as possible. It is important for the student to express himself and realize that people are interested in his success. This writer also recommends the teaching of notebook skills and the teaching of various learning strategies to all students, starting earlier than the seventh grade.

Peer counseling is an effective intervention method and worked better than did the teacher mentor program. The students enjoyed working with peers and this element of an at-risk program is one that should be further investigated.

Finally, the interdisciplinary approach in dealing with the at-risk student is of utmost importance. No one element is more important than any other element. It is imperative that parents, faculty, and administration become involved with the solving of the problems associated with the at-risk student.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum were shared in three ways. The first way was by submission of the practicum and its results to the principal of the secondary school, who in turn made it available to the administration of the primary school.

The writer also shared the information with the

faculty of the secondary school and discussed the results of this practicum. This resulted in teacher volunteers to work with identified students in the mentor program.

Finally, the results of the practicum were also presented to some members of the school's education committee for review. This committee recognizes the importance of the program as described and if the financial picture changes there may be a reassessment of the peer counseling program and its eventual reinstatement into the curriculum.

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APPENDIX A

WEEKLY LOG

WEEKLY LOG

Week_____

Area of report_____

Successful Methods:

Unsuccessful Methods:

Students Reaction:

Comments:

Attitudes Evident:

Facilitator's Reaction:

Comments:

Areas of Concern:

APPENDIX B

STUDENT SELF ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

Self Study

The following questions are about **you**. Please read each statement, and then decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Place an **X** next to the statement that best describes how you feel.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal with others.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

APPENDIX C

WEEKLY STUDENT RATING CARD

WEEKLY STUDENT RATING CARD

NAME_____

DATE_____

Please rate this child in each of the areas listed below using ratings of 1 to 5.

1 = excellent 2 = good 3 = fair 4 = poor
5 = terrible or did not work

	Periods								
Area	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
Participation									
Classwork									
Homework									
Interaction									
Teacher's Initials and comments									

1 = +25 points 2 = +15 points 3 = +5 points
4 = -15 points 5 = -25 points

APPENDIX D

SCHOOL AND STUDY SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

School and Study Habits

1. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class in school?

_____I am among the best

_____I am above average

_____I am below average

_____I am among the poorest

2. Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your own opinion, how good do you think your work is?

_____My work is excellent

_____My work is good

_____My work is average

_____My work is below average

_____My work is much below average

3. What do you think about the grades teachers give at your school?

_____very fair; all of those who get good grades deserve them

_____fair; most of those who get good grades deserve them

_____somewhat fair; there are some who get good grades who shouldn't

_____not fair; the wrong students get the good grades

Check the study skills training you have received instruction in during your schooling.

	yes	no
notetaking	____	_____
Test-taking	____	_____
Time management	____	_____
Research Techniques	____	_____
Reading comprehension	____	_____
Finding main ideas/details	____	_____
Using the library	____	_____

How often do you study outside of school? (check one)

a. _____every day

b. _____at least three times a week

c. _____only a couple of times a week

d. _____only when I feel it is necessary

e. _____never

Is it important to set a regular time for studying?

a. _____very important

b. _____important

c. _____not important

Do you develop a weekly schedule to help you manage your study time?

_____yes _____no

Do you have a system of taking notes in class?

_____yes _____no

Do you have a system of taking notes from your text books and other reading materials?

_____yes _____no

When reading your assignments do you write down questions you would ask your teacher about the next day?

_____yes _____no

APPENDIX E

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FORM

TEACHER RECOMMENDATION FORM

Teacher_____

Student_____

Place a X by the areas of concern.

_____1. Has difficulty following projects through from beginning to end.

_____2. Judges self without mercy.

_____3. Takes self seriously.

_____4. Feels different from others.

_____5. Constantly seeks approval and affirmation.

_____6. Looks for immediate as opposed to deferred gratification.

_____7. Avoids conflict or aggravates it; rarely deals with it.

_____8. Fears failure, but sabotages his own success.

My main area of concern for this student is:

The student presently is doing the following that suggests he should be considered for this program.

APPENDIX F

RESULTS OF FIRST SELF ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

Self Study Results #1

The following questions are about **you**. Please read each statement, and then decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Place an **X** next to the statement that best describes how you feel.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal with others.

__15__ strongly agree

__16__ agree

___4__ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

__12__ strongly agree

__16__ agree

___7__ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

_____ strongly agree

__7__ agree

_16__ disagree

_12__ strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

__9__ strongly agree

_11__ agree

_14__ disagree

__1__ strongly disagree

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.

_____ strongly agree

__2__ agree

_12__ disagree

_21__ strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

_____ strongly agree

__8__ agree

__23_ disagree

__4__ strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

__2__ strongly agree

_16__ agree

_13__ disagree

__4__ strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

__4__ strongly agree

_13__ agree

_15__ disagree

__3__ strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

__10_ strongly agree

__15_ agree

___7_ disagree

___3_ strongly disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.

__4___ strongly agree

__24___ agree

__7___ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

APPENDIX G

RESULTS OF SECOND SELF ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

Self Study Results #2

The following questions are about **you**. Please read each statement, and then decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Place an **X** next to the statement that best describes how you feel.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal with others.

__18__ strongly agree

__16__ agree

___1__ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

__16__ strongly agree

__16__ agree

___3__ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

_____ strongly agree

__3__ agree

_20__ disagree

_12__ strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

_14__ strongly agree

_18__ agree

_3__ disagree

____ strongly disagree

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.

_____ strongly agree

__2__ agree

_11__ disagree

_22__ strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

__2__ strongly agree

__10_ agree

__23_ disagree

____ strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

__2__ strongly agree

_11__ agree

_19__ disagree

__3__ strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

__4__ strongly agree

_13__ agree

_15__ disagree

__3__ strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

__10_ strongly agree

__17_ agree

___7_ disagree

___1_ strongly disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.

__4___ strongly agree

__20___ agree

__9___ disagree

__2__ strongly disagree

APENDIX H

RESULTS OF THIRD SELF ESTEEM QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

Self Study Results #3

The following questions are about **you**. Please read each statement, and then decide whether you agree or disagree with it. Place an **X** next to the statement that best describes how you feel.

1. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal with others.

__18__ strongly agree

__12__ agree

____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

__20__ strongly agree

__10__ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

3. All in all, I am inclined to think that I am a failure.

____ strongly agree

__2__ agree

__8__ disagree

_10_ strongly disagree

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

_17_ strongly agree

_13_ agree

_____ disagree

____ strongly disagree

5. I feel that I do not have much to be proud of.

_____ strongly agree

__2__ agree

_17_ disagree

_11_ strongly disagree

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

_11_ strongly agree

_17_ agree

__2__ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

__18__ strongly agree

__12__ agree

_____ disagree

_____ strongly disagree

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

___1___ strongly agree

___9___ agree

__15__ disagree

___5___ strongly disagree

9. I certainly feel useless at times.

_____ strongly agree

___5___ agree

__18__ disagree

___7___ strongly disagree

10. At times I think I am no good at all.

_____ strongly agree

_____ agree

__13__ disagree

__17__ strongly disagree

APPENDIX I

HOW I STUDY QUESTIONNAIRE

HOW I STUDY

Directions: Read and answer the questions on you study habits.

Yes	No	
___	___	1. Do you have a regular schedule for study, a particular time to save for study?
___	___	2. Do you frequently have a radio, record, or the television playing as you study?
___	___	3. Do you have a regular place to study?
___	___	4. Is your study often interrupted by telephoning, visiting, looking at magazines, or other activities?
___	___	5. Do you believe that in addition to learning the details of a subject you must learn the big, overall story or idea of the subject?
___	___	6. Do you customarily read at the speed that is easy and most natural for you?
___	___	7. Do you deliberately study and plan to be able to participate in a class discussion?
___	___	8. Do you do a little extra studying before tests?
___	___	9. Do you think through the meaning of test questions before you begin to answer them?

___ ___10. Do you stay up late the night before a test studying for it?

___ ___11. Do you concentrate fully when you are studying?

___ ___12. Do you seldom review except just before tests?

___ ___13. As you study, do you constantly try to express in your own words what the author is saying?

___ ___14. Do you review by rereading or scanning the material that you are to be tested on?

___ ___15. Do you review some of each subject that you have studied on a previous day as well as studying new material?

___ ___16. Do you stay up late the night before a test studying for it?

___ ___17. Do you take a great many notes on what the teacher says?

___ ___18. Do you seldom take notes on reading assignments?

___ ___19. Are you willing to work harder during the time you spend?

___ ___20. Are you relaxed and take it easy in class?

APPENDIX J

RESULTS OF SCHOOL AND STUDY HABITS QUESTIONNAIRE

Student Questionnaire

School and Study Habits

1. How do you rate yourself in school ability compared with those in your class in school?

_____I am among the best

_____I am above average

__24_I am below average

__11_I am among the poorest

2. Forget for a moment how others grade your work. In your own opinion, how good do you think your work is?

_____My work is excellent

_____My work is good

__18_My work is average

__14_My work is below average

___3__My work is much below average

3. What do you think about the grades teachers give at your school?

_____very fair; all of those who get good grades deserve them

__11_fair; most of those who get good grades deserve them

__22_somewhat fair; there are some who get good grades who shouldn't

__2__not fair; the wrong students get the good grades

Check the study skills training you have received instruction in during your schooling.

	yes	no
notetaking	0	35
Test-taking	0	35
Time management	0	35
Research Techniques	22	13
Reading comprehension	29	6
Finding main ideas/details	18	17
Using the library	30	5

How often do you study outside of school? (check one)

a. 28 every day

b. 6 at least three times a week

c. 1 only a couple of times a week

d. _____only when I feel it is necessary

e. _____never

Is it important to set a regular time for studying?

a. 2 very important

b. 10 important

c. 23 not important

Do you develop a weekly schedule to help you manage your study time?

__0___yes __35___no

Do you have a system of taking notes in class?

__0___yes __35___no

Do you have a system of taking notes from your text books and other reading materials?

__3___yes __32___no

When reading your assignments do you write down questions you would ask your teacher about the next day?

__0___yes __35___no